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Prisoners in Millersville

By

Alice Norris-Lewis

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PRISONERS IN MILLERSVILLE

A FARCICAL DRAMA
IN FOUR ACTS

By

ALICE NORRIS-LEWIS

Author of "The Spy at St. Agnes," etc.

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Prisoners in Millersville

A FARCICAL DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

CHARACTERS

MISS SUSIE CUMMINGS—Who takes summer boarders in Millersville.

ROSE MARIE MCINTOSH—Her maid of all work.

MRS. JANE ALLEN—An inquisitive neighbor.

RANDOLPH KING, alias Charles Tilton	}	By reason of a lost pocketbook and broken auto, these two are held prisoners in Millersville.
ROBERT WEBSTER, alias James Tilton		

BEATRIX KING—Sister of Randolph.

DOLLY KING—Kid sister of Randolph.

MRS. KING—His mother.

LUCILE MARTIN—A friend of the Kings'.

MRS. EMMA IRVING—A boarder.

PAULINE IRVING—Her niece.

ETHELIND IRVING—Her niece.

AUGUSTUS ADOLPHUS VAN DER WATER—A boarder, -
in love with Ethelind.

TIME: The present.

COSTUMES: Modern.

SCENE

[Veranda of old-fashioned New England home-
stead. Unchanged throughout the play.]

ACT I

SCENE: [*Front porch of Miss Susie Cummings' cottage in Millersville, N. H. Miss Susie sits in center of stage peeling potatoes*].

MISS CUMMINGS: Rose Marie! Rose Marie! Come here, I want you! That girl is as hard to keep track of as a flea. I sent her out half an hour ago to see if the cow was tied, and she ain't come back yet. Rose Marie! Rose Marie!

ROSE MARIE [*in distance*]: I'm comin'.

MISS C.: I should think it was about time. [*Enter Rose Marie.*] Where you been all this time?

ROSE MARIE: Lookin' after the mooley. She's alright. She's havin' the time of her life gettin' outside the weeds in the back yard.

MISS C.: Weeds in the back yard! Mercy on us! There ain't any. Them's green peas. Do you mean to say that plaguy cow is into them and you didn't stop her? [*Jumps up and starts to rush out. At door bumps into Mrs. Jane Allen, who is just entering with a cup in hand.*] Goodness, I near upset you, Jane. Go up on the piazza and sit down while I look after that cow of mine. I'll be right back. [*Exit.*]

[*Mrs. Allen takes the chair Miss C. has vacated and begins to stare at R. M. R. M. stares boldly back again. They glare at each other a few moments in silence.*]

R. M.: Like the looks?

Mrs. A.: I dunno, I ain't made up my mind yet.

R. M.: Take all the time you want. I ain't holdin' my breath to know if you think my back hair's on straight.

MRS. A.: Did Miss Susie bring you from the city?

R. M.: Naw.

MRS. A.: Be you a relation of hers?

R. M.: Naw.

MRS. A.: Who are you then?

R. M.: I dunno.

MRS. A.: You dunno? Dunno who you be? Then you must be crazy.

R. M.: I am.

MRS. A.: Mercy on us. Don't come any nigher me than you are. [*Enter Miss C.*]

MISS C.: You run right up to the lower potato patch and see if the cow's been in there, too, Rose Marie. She's eat up almost all the peas.

R. M.: Where's the spud patch?

MISS C.: Down by the spring. Hurry! [*Exit R. M.*]

MRS. A.: Who is she for pity's sakes? I should be scared to death of her.

MISS C.: She's a poor girl I brought back from the city. I'm goin' to keep her for the summer. Did you want to borrow something?

MRS. A.: Ahem—eh, yes. A little—er—er—flour.

MISS C.: I'm sorry, Jane, but I'm just out. I cleaned up everything when I went to the city, and the grocer ain't been with my order yet.

MRS. A.: Wal, never mind. I don't need it. I wanted to borry something, and I thought flour was as good as anything. Did you have a nice time up to Boston?

MISS C.: Yes, real nice. But I like home best. I warn't made for the city.

MRS. A.: It's been real lonesome since you been gone. I s'pose you've had the Millersville Tatler sent you each week? You see Silas Simpkins is dead and Eph Turner has married Huldah Gales.

MISS C.: Yes, I kept appraised of town topics. Well, Death comes to us all, and Matrimony will set in.

MRS. A.: But the idee of Eph and Huldah! Land sakes, Eph can't earn enough money to keep a mosquiter in tobacco, let alone himself. I don't see what possessed Huldah.

MISS C.: Wal, she's goin' in with her eyes open. She's known Eph ever since he was born and ain't known no good of him.

MRS. A.: I thought you'd bring some of your folks home with you.

MISS C.: No. I'm going to take some of their friends to board, instead.

MRS. A.: Fer the land sakes!

MISS C.: Cousin Anne suggested it. She said it was silly of me not to try it. She says there's heaps of money in it. She spoke to some of her friends about me an' Millersville and half a dozen of 'em are coming up for July. Rose Marie'll help with the work, and I've got a garden and the cow and all the city conveniences, so it won't be hard.

MRS. A.: I shouldn't think you'd want a parcel of strangers 'round all summer.

MISS C.: Oh, they ain't exactly strangers. I've met them all. I'm goin' to have a couple of college

boys to wait on table and help 'round. It will please the girls and make them want to stay longer.

MRS. A.: Got the boys yet?

MISS C.: Not yet, but they're comin' any day. Anne'll send them.

MRS. A.: Well, I must say you're crazy long with that Rose Marie. The idee! Summer boarders at your time of life, an' fellars and gals lally-gaggin' 'round your front porch. You'll wish you was buttered 'fore two weeks is up.

MISS C.: Maybe I will—but I shan't run over with the butter knife an' ask you to butter me, Jane.

MRS. A. [*rising*]: Oh, I know what you mean. Tain't none of my business. Wal, I guess I'd better be goin'. I shan't come over agin in a hurry, neither.

MISS C.: Jest as you like, Jane. [*Exit Mrs. A.*] Now, she's mad. I don't care. Curiosity will cure her sooner or later! [*Enter R. M. with two young men tied together with rope.*] Mercy sakes alive! What is this, Rose Marie?

R. M. [*to boys*]: Stop youse pullin' I tell yer!

RANDOLPH [*savagely*]: Who's pulling?

R. M.: Youse! Sit down. [*Both try to sit on one chair.*]

MISS C.: Who are they, Rose Marie? Where did you get them?

R. M.: I dunno who they are. [*To boys.*] Keep your feet still. You make me nervous.

MISS C.: For pity's sake, child, tell me all about it.

R. M.: It was this way, Mis' Susie. I went down to the potater patch and the mooley hadn't been in it at all. I was jest comin' back when I heard a honk-

honk wagon comin' over the hill. I ain't seen one sense I left Boston, so I thought I'd wait and look at it—might cheer me up. Wal, when the joy riders sees the spring they shuts off the juice and stops to water up. Say, that was the driest buggy I ever seen. It took gallons to fill her up. Then Foxey Grandpa, here [*points to Randolph*] says to Grammy, here [*points to Bob*]: "Of all punk roads, this is the punkest. This is the one Jack Williams said ran right through the state like an Oriental rug. When I see Williams I'll make him eat his lie." "Let's take a short cut an' see if we can't strike something better," advises Grammy. "See that nice, soft grass over there." "That ain't grass, loony," says Foxey. "It's somethin' growin'." "Wal," asks Grammy, "don't grass grow?" "Oh, you know what I mean," growls Foxey. "It's potatoes or something." "I don't care if it's gold bricks," says Grammy. "Let's cut across, and if the farmer pinches us for it, I should worry." So off they go, but when they got in the middle of the spud patch, somethin' went off ker-bang. I legged it across the field and there they was, down underneath the machine lookin' fer trouble. Then I jest helped myself to some rope I found in the car, tied them up and brought them here. What you goin' to do with 'em?

MISS C.: Oh, dear, oh, dear! And the potatoes were nearly ready to dig. Oh, dear, dear, dear! What shall I do to these awful boys?

R. M.: Kill 'em. I'll fix Foxey.

RAN.: If you will listen to me, madame, I think I can explain things a little. I admit that I went into the field purposely, but I am willing to pay the costs. In fact, I intended to do so—

R. M.: You did, in me eye!

BOB: I don't believe, madame, that we have done so much damage. We may have run over a couple of dozen plants, but as there is only one potato on a plant—

Miss C.: One potato on a plant! You know little about potatoes, young man.

RAN.: The best I can do now, madame, is to pay for what damage I've done and ask your permission to roll my machine into your barn until we can repair it. We will board with you while we work on it and pay you well. Can I be more fair?

Miss C.: I don't know's you can. But money won't really pay for the damage. Oh, dear! Boys ain't what they was when I was young. Rose Marie, untie them.

R. M.: Let 'em produce the cash, first.

RAN.: Oh, we have it. You may go to my coat pocket and take it out yourself.

R. M. [*searching coat*]: I bet you swiped the car and the money too. There ain't no pocketbook here, though, as far as I can find.

RAN.: There is. In the inside, left hand pocket.

R. M.: Nothing doin'.

BOB: I bet you've lost your pocketbook. I was dead broke anyway.

RAN.: I tell you I haven't lost it. Untie me, Angel-face, I won't break away.

R. M.: I guess it won't do any harm to untie you. We've got your flivver an' that's more valuable than youse. [*Unties them.*] Now find your money—if you can. [*Ran. hunts frantically, but finds nothing.*]

RAN. [*to R. M.*]: You've taken it!

R. M.: I ain't. Don't you dare call me a thief!

RAN.: It's gone sure as Fate!

BOB: Now we are in a fix!

Miss C.: I'm afraid Rose Marie is right. You have not been telling me the truth.

R. M. [*to Miss C.*]: Come here a minute. I've got it all doped out. You need two boys to help this summer. Now's your chance. Instead of givin' them to the police, tell 'em they've got to stay and pay for the damage they've done by workin' fer you. They'll have to stay, for they ain't got any money to leave with, and if they stay they'll work—believe me.

Miss C.: That is a good idea, Rose Marie. The only thing is—I don't know as I want them. I want nice, gentlemanly boys, if they're going to be 'round where I am all summer. Still, Anne said college boys would be hard to get, and she didn't know—I believe I'll try 'em. [*To boys.*] I hope you've been telling me the truth, although I must say it doesn't look so. You ought to be turned right over to the constable, but I'll make you this proposition first. You see, I'm going to keep summer boarders, and I need two boys about your size to chore around for me while they're here. I don't know as you'll do, for you don't either of you look like you could spell the word "work" even, but I'm going to give you the chance to work out the damage you've done me. I'll give you a chance to think it over a minit. Remember, it is that or the constable. [*Exit Miss C. and R. M.*]

RAN.: Well, we're in for it.

BOB: It's your fault. You shouldn't have lost your pocketbook.

RAN.: Anyone would think you believed I did it on purpose.

BOB: We'll have to stay here until we get some cash. I'll write to Dad tonight.

RAN.: You'll have to, but remember not to mention you are with me. I don't want the governor to know I've smashed the machine. He didn't know I took it, for he was in the West on a business trip, and I meant to be back before him. The last time I smashed it he told me I wasn't to run it again. I'll get Hail Columbia Happy Land if you blab on me.

BOB: Dad's getting to be a regular tightwad with me lately. I don't know as I can get any money, but I'll try.

RAN.: Tell him we're desperate. Better telegraph.

BOB: Where's the money to pay for it?

RAN.: See if you can't find a half dollar about you somewhere.

BOB [*hunting*]: Can you get blood out of a stone? But here's a postage stamp.

RAN.: We can write.

BOB [*writing and reading*]: Dear Dad:—Please send five hundred immediately. Dad broke and in distress. Your affectionate son, Robert. Do you think that will touch his stony heart? I've underlined distress twice and immediately five times. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: Well, have youse two made up your minds? Miss Susie says anyway, you've got to split wood for supper.

BOB: Some supper—wood.

R. M.: Don't get fresh.

RAN.: I want you to understand I don't do anything until I get my machine into the barn.

R. M.: And I want you to understand that you ain't the boss around here, and if Miss Susie says chop wood, you chop.

RAN.: You're the limit for a grouch.

R. M.: I know it. Sixty miles per is my limit and I ain't worked up to thirty yet.

BOB: Where's the mailbox?

RAN.: On the front gate. [*Enter Miss C.*]

MISS C.: Have they decided to stay, Rose Marie?

R. M.: They're so slow decidin' I'll speak for 'em. Yes, they'll stay. [*To boys.*] This way to the wood-pile. [*They follow R. M. out at left.*]

MISS C.: Rose Marie is smart. I'd never have thought of this scheme. It's lucky this thing happened, for I just got a letter from Anne and she couldn't find me a boy. I'd advertised them in the paper and the gals would have been awful upset not to find any here.

RAN. [*outside*]: Ouch! My thumb!

BOB [*outside*]: Look out. When this axe gets through this hunk of wood they'll be something doing. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: You'd die to see 'em work. They ain't used to anything very lively in that line, you can see.

RAN. [*outside*]: Quick, Bob. I've nearly cut my thumb off.

MISS C. [*running out at left*]: Mercy on us! Let's see if he has.

R. M. [*going out leisurely*]: By the way he was choppin' he might any minute cut his head off. But tain't much use to him, so far's I can see, so what would it matter?

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: [*Same as Act I. Randolph, sweeping and scrubbing piazza, whistling and occasionally taking huge bites of a pie which he has hidden beneath a chair. Enter Bob*].

BOB: Here you are! I've been looking all over the ranch for you. It's your turn to feed the pig.

RAN.: Ah, go on! I fed him yesterday.

BOB: I'll tell the world you didn't. I fed him yesterday and the day before that and the day before that.

RAN.: You ought to be satisfied. You're out in the nice, fresh air.

BOB: Nice, fresh air!

RAN.: Anyway, it's better than wiping dishes for The Angel. She keeps folks on the hump.

BOB: I don't understand why we don't hear from Dad. The last time I hit him for money he said he'd never give me another cent, but he's been saying that for the last three years, so I didn't put any stock in it. It looks, now, as though he meant it.

RAN.: We've got to do something. We must have money to fix that auto. The engine is in awful shape.

BOB: I don't know where we are going to get any. We couldn't even steal any in this burg—there's none to steal. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: Which one of youse milked the mooley yesterday?

BOB: I did.

RAN.: I beg your pardon, I did. I do all the work on this farm.

R. M.: Well, who milked her this morning? Miss Susie wants to know what you do with all the milk.

RAN.: Put it in the pail where it belongs, Miss Looney.

R. M. [*going to door and calling*]: Foxey Grandpa milked this mornin'. He says he put the milk in the pail. [*Enter Miss C.*]

MISS C.: Is that all the milk you got?

RAN.: Yes, marm.

MISS C.: Well, I never. That cow generally gives six or eight quarts a day, but she ain't give over three since you've been here.

R. M.: Oh, he probably lets her kick over the bucket. He don't seem ter grasp the idea of country life in America in the leastest!

MISS C.: I want you boys to hurry now and get through with your chores for the boarders are coming on the 10:30 train and one of you has got to drive to meet them. [*To Ran.*] I suppose you think this piazza is cleaned, but it ain't—far from it. Go get a brush and scrub up that spot by the chair there. [*Exit Ran. to return with pail and brush.*] Now, put some elbow grease in it. Get down on your knees to it. [*Ran. scrubs and forgets the pie he has hidden. It comes to view.*]

R. M.: My eye! See the pie he's got! He's swiped it and eat it half up.

MISS C.: You can't trust them a minute. I dunno but it would have been better for my peace of mind if I'd handed them over to the constable. [*To Ran.*] That looks better. Now you can go and dig some potatoes for dinner. Come, Jim, you've got to go to the train for the folks. [*Exit R. M. and Miss C.*]

RAN.: Say, Bob, do you suppose there's a pawnshop in town?

BOB: No, I do not. But why?

RAN.: I was thinking we might hock our watches.

BOB: I'll keep a weather eye open for three golden balls; while I wait for the train I'll slip around town and see if I can do anything. Here's my watch and a scarf pin. We ought to get a hundred on the whole thing. [*Enter Miss C.*]

Miss C.: I don't suppose you know anybody in Boston, do you?

BOB: Not a soul.

Miss C.: These people all hail from there. There is Mrs. Randolph King and her two daughters, Beatrix and Dolly, and Miss King's friend, Lucile Martin. Then there's Mrs. Emma Irving and her two nieces, Pauline and Ethelind. The little girl, Ethelind, is in love with some man, and her aunt is bringing her up here to get her away from him. I hope you boys will behave yourselves. Come, Jim, you go git ready to start. Harness up Dobbin. [*Exit.*]

[*After the exit of Miss C., Bob and Ran. stare helplessly at each other for a few moments.*]

RAN.: What shall we do?

BOB: Let's tramp it back to Boston. The jig is up.

RAN.: There's the auto.

BOB: I forgot that. We can't go without it, and, confound it, we can't take it with us. We'll never hear the last of this scrape. I don't know what we will do.

RAN.: There's one thing we can try to do, but I'm afraid it won't work very well. We'll pretend we never saw any of the folks before and keep on

calling ourselves Charles and Jim Tilton. No matter what they say, we must not forget ourselves.

BOB: Of course that won't do. Trix is a shrewd one, and so is Dolly. She'll be worse to manage than all the others. Trust a kid for that.

RAN.: Yes, but—a fellow is supposed to know his own name, isn't he? If you go up to a man, clap him on the back and say, "Hi, there, Harry Brown," and he gives you the glassy eye and retorts, "You are mistaken. My name is not Brown, but Green." what are you going to do? He's supposed to be sane and sure of his identity.

BOB: Oh, hang! I'll feel like an idiot when Trix sees me wiping Miss Susie's dishes.

RAN.: Lucile will never speak to me again when she sees me feeding the pig.

BOB: Life isn't worth living and there's no balm in Gilead. I'm going to commit suicide. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: Are youse ready?

RAN.: Yes. He is.

R. M.: Why don't he speak for himself, John?

BOB: I'm ready. [*To Ran.*] We'll try the scheme, anyway. [*To Rose Marie.*] Come on, Angel. [*Exit R. M. and Bob. Enter Miss C.*]

Miss C.: You needn't dig potatoes after all. Go get ready for the boarders. You'll make a better impression cleaned up.

RAN.: No doubt I'll make an impression. [*Exit.*]

Miss C.: I declare, I'm clean beat out. I dunno but Jane Allen was right and these summer boarders will be the death of me. And them two boys worry me most to death with their ignorance of common

farm chores. I reckon that's the result of always living in the city. If 'twasn't for Rose Marie, I'd be plum crazy. Poor child, it's too bad she ain't had the right start; but I'm going to do right by her while she's here in Millersville. It won't be long 'til she can stand up beside the best of 'em. She's no dummy! [*Enter Ran.*]

MISS C.: Wal, you look better spruced up. You ain't handsome, but of course you can't help that. Sit down and sit still. Don't shuffle your feet or whistle. It gives me the figets. The boarders ought to be right along now.

RAN.: I hear 'em coming!

MISS C.: No you don't, either. The train ain't whistled yet. It whistles soon's it's in. Gracious, there's that cow makin' for Jane Allen's flower bed. Head her off, quick. [*Exit Ran.*] Now see him! He can't catch her and it seems jest like she laughed in his face every time she gets by him. [*Enter Ran.*]

MISS C.: Don't you know any better than to stand in front of a cow and wave your arms at her when you're trying to catch her? You'll scare her to death.

RAN.: I wish I could. The team's coming.

MISS C. [*in a flutter*]: So 'tis. Do I look alright?

RAN.: Lovely. [*To himself.*] In about thirty minutes I'll look like thirty cents. [*Enter R. M., Bob and summer boarders.*]

R. M.: Here we be, Miss Susie, the whole shootin' match of us.

MISS C.: I'm glad to see you. [*Shakes hands with boarders.*] Everything's ready and dinner's on cooking. I suppose you'll want to get washed up a little, so Rose Marie'll show you right up to your rooms.

LUCILE [*gazing around*]: I think this is the loveliest little mountain village I ever saw.

BEATRIX: Just heavenly. I know we shall enjoy every minute of our stay here.

DOLLY [*to Miss C.*]: May I go right out and see the cow slip?

MISS C.: Mercy sakes alive! What does the little dear mean?

MRS. KING: Oh, her father, who is a great tease, told her she must be sure to make the butter fly and see the cow slip. I can't make her understand he was only joking.

DOLLY: Have you got a cow that can slip?

RAN.: Have we got a cow that can slip. Well, she can slip me any time, I'll tell the world.

BEATRIX: Goodness, mother! There's Randolph.

DOLLY: Oh, Rannie, Rannie! [*Runs to him and hugs him.*]

MRS. K.: My dear boy! What a relief to find you here. We have been very much worried over your absence. [*Kisses him.*]

RAN.: I'm sorry, ma'm, but you've made a mistake. My name is Tilton—Charles Tilton.

MRS. K.: Why, I—er—I don't understand. You are the exact image of my son Randolph. Isn't he, Beatrix?

BEATRIX: The likeness is startling. Still he says his name is Tilton, and I presume he knows his own name.

LUCILE: The fellow that drove us up looks like Bob Webster. But I suppose that is another singular coincidence.

BOB: My name is Tilton, too. I am a brother of Charles.

MRS. K.: It is very, very, strange. I don't understand it. I have heard of doubles in the world, but I never saw it illustrated before. It is positively uncanny.

BEATRIX: I'm still not disposed to believe it. [*To Miss C.*] How long have you known these two fellows, and what do you know about them?

R. M.: She knows little good of 'em, Miss, I can say.

BEATRIX: Are they giving me their right names?

R. M.: I don't know, miss. Very likely not. But—it's the names they've answered the call to dinner, breakfast and supper with ever since they've been here and it ain't taken them long to get there, either.

MRS. K.: I don't understand it. Please show me to my room, Miss Cummings. I'm quite overcome with it all. [*Exit R. M., Miss C. and boarders.*]

RAN.: It will work for a while, but not for long. The letter with the money may come in the next mail and then we'll be all set, anyway. Did you pawn the watches?

BOB: Did I pawn the watches? I'll say I did—Not. There wasn't a hock shop in town, and if there had been a hundred Rose Marie wouldn't have let me out of her sight long enough to do anything. She stuck like a poor relation.

RAN.: Who is this coming up the path? [*Enter Augustus Adolphus Van Der Water.*]

VAN: Excuse me! Is this a boarding house run by a Miss Cummings?

BOB: It am.

VAN: Could I see her please? [*Enter R. M.*]

BOB: Here's something that wants to see Miss Cummings.

R. M. [*surveying Van*]: My eye! He looks almost human.

VAN: Beg pardon, madame. My name is Augustus Adolphus Van Der Water. Here is my card. I'm looking for a room. Could I engage one for the month of July?

R. M.: I don't know, Gus. We're pretty particular about who clutters up our rooms. Got a receipted bill from your last boarding lady?

VAN: Really now, I never hired a room before. I own a mansion in town, 'pon my word I do. I'm very wealthy. My father is Augustus Van Der Water, the manufacturer of ladies' false switches, puffs, etc. No doubt you are wearing some of his goods now.

R. M.: I'm only wearing my own hair, you impudent idiot. [*Going to door and calling.*] Miss Susie! Miss Susie! Here's a man here wants a room. Better see him before you let him have it. [*Enter Miss C. and Mrs. I.*]

MRS. I.: I believe your letter stated that you had somebody here who is capable of teaching a girl a little backward in her studies.

MISS C.: I got two college boys here.

MRS. I.: My niece, Pauline, is very, very deficient in Latin and English. May I see the young man who is capable of teaching?

MISS C. [*to Bob*]: Come here, Jim. Do you know Latin?

BOB: I am intimately acquainted with it.

MRS. I.: Do you think you could teach my niece? She is very anxious to go on with her college class but can not unless she makes up both her Latin and English.

BOB: Which niece? The little one or the tall one?

MRS. I.: Pauline. The tall, dark one.

BOB: I'm afraid I couldn't, madame. But my brother could do it, easily. [*To Ran.*] Come here. Charles, you are spoken for.

MRS. I.: Your brother says you are well up in Latin.

RAN.: My brother, ahem—is untruthful.

MRS. I.: But couldn't you teach it, if you wanted to?

BOB [*aside to Ran.*]: She wants you to teach the tall, dark girl. She was a peach.

RAN.: Of course. I can teach your niece.

MRS. I.: Could you arrange to give her a lesson in the morning?

RAN.: Indeed, I can.

VAN [*who has been standing uncomfortably about during the conversation*]: Excuse me, but could I get a room here for the month of July? I'm sorry to trouble you, but if you have no room I must go back and catch the next train—which is the last train, I believe—to Boston today.

MRS. I.: Augustus Adolphus Van Der Water! I presume you followed us.

VAN: Oh, no, madame, no, no! Is—er—is Miss Ethelind well?

MRS. I: I decline to answer. [*Exit.*]

MISS C.: I've got one small room left. Will that do?

VAN: Oh, nicely. I'll go to it at once. [*Enter Ethelind.*]

ETHELIND: Oh, Gus! Gus! I knew you'd come. When did you get my post card?

VAN: This morning. And I hustled right aboard the same train and came along.

ETHELIND: Oh, I'm so glad. This place is about as lively as a tombstone. Now you've come, it will be livelier.

VAN: Oh, yes, I'm such a gay fellow, don't you know!

ETHELIND: Have you seen Aunt Emma?

VAN: Yes, and she positively glared at me. I was almost afraid of her.

ETHELIND: She won't let us go anywhere together, but we'll talk with our signal code, won't we. You know! [*She pulls curl that hangs over shoulder.*]

VAN: That means, "I love you!" Oh, indeed, I know.

ETHELIND: I don't dare stay a minute longer or Aunt Emma will catch me. Good-bye, Gus. [*Pulls curl. Exit.*]

RAN. [*to Bob*]: I feel ill. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: Come on, youse two. Miss Susie wants you to peel taters and whip cream for dinner. Hipper.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: [*Same as previous act. Beatrice is discovered swinging in the hammock. Randolph, who has been sweeping the piazza, sits opposite her, with a pail of water at his feet and a broom in hand.*]

BEATRIX: Do you know, I've finally made up my mind about you.

RAN.: Indeed!

BEATRIX: You've puzzled me ever since I first saw you. One day I would half believe you were my brother and the next day I would believe you were Charles Tilton. Now I am certain. You are my brother Randolph King and no other. Now, you may think, Ran., that it's great fun to play this trick and keep mother worried half to death—but it isn't funny at all and I advise you to call it off.

RAN.: By what charming logic did you arrive at this definite conclusion as to my identity?

BEATRIX: I reason this way. If you were not my brother you would make love to me. All men do. Since you do not—moreover, since you notice me even less than you do the maid-of-all-work—you must be my brother. I never had any attraction for him.

RAN. [*aside*]: Good reasoning, Bea! [*To Beatrice.*] I'll admit your deduction is sensible, but there may be more than one reason why I haven't made love to you besides the one you believe. Simply because I don't, is no reason why I wouldn't like to, you know. And as for failing to notice you—my eye is on you every moment you are within it's vision. [*Aside.*] You bet it is. I'm wondering what she'll spring next for a trap to catch me in. But—will she bite? Will she bite? [*To Beatrice.*] I have always worshipped you—from a distance.

BEATRIX [*aside*]: He's not so slow for a chore boy after all. [*To Ran.*] I don't believe I understand you.

RAN. [*aside*]: She's nibbling! She's nibbling! [*He sits beside her in the hammock.*] I mean what I say. Ever since I first saw you I have worshiped you—at a distance.

BEATRIX: How cleverly you have concealed your interest!

RAN. [*aside*]: She'll swallow hook, line, bait and all in a second. [*To Beatrice.*] I have meant to let "concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on my damask cheek"—you know, like Shakespeare and all the other poets. But how could a fellow like myself, without a penny in my pocket, a country bumpkin, a chore boy, a—a—a— [*he embraces Beatrice*].

BEATRIX: Oh, please don't, Mr. Tilton. I—I—think I hear my mother calling. Please let me go.

RAN. [*holding her*]: Not until you have given me permission to woo you beldly, to show my love for you madly, to—to—to—

BEATRIX [*trying to escape*]: Please let me go! Please!

RAN.: You are angry with me for having spoken? Ah, I should have carried my guilty secret to the grave! [*Hanging head.*]

BEATRIX: No, no, Mr. Tilton. I am not angry. Of course not, but—but—Oh, let me go.

RAN. [*holding her with most unlover-like force*]: Not until you have promised at some future date to become my wife.

BEATRIX [*aside*]: Oh, goodness! I'll have to promise to get away. Why did I ever start this scene anyway? [*To Ran.*] Yes, I—I—promise.

RAN.: At some future date? [*Aside.*] About a thousand years from now.

BEATRIX [*aside*]: That's very indefinite. I'll promise. [*To Ran.*] Yes, yes. Years and years from now, I'll be your wife.

RAN.: One kiss before you go, my, my—beloved.

BEATRIX [*clapping hands over mouth*]: Yes, yes. [*She kisses him on one ear a moment later and runs out. Enter Bob, to find Ran. dancing around the piazza in great glee.*]

BOB: What's the celebration?

RAN.: I'm overcome with happiness. Trix has promised to marry me. We're to be married at some future date. Congratulations!

BOB: You false and frisky friend! I don't believe it. She is already engaged to me—or was before we came on this fool trip—and I don't believe she's forgotten me, if I haven't had the price of a postage stamp to write her for a week.

RAN.: I've cut you out, Bobby boy. Oh, it was like taking candy from a child. Will I tease her this winter. I'll say so.

BOB: I wonder if Lucile would fall for me that way. Guess I'll try it.

RAN.: Go on. She won't bite. She's heaps shrewder than Bea any May morning. Go on. I should worry. Here she comes. I'll get behind the hammock and watch you get stung. [*Dodges behind hammock. Enter Lucile Martin.*]

LUCILE: Good morning, Mr. Tilton. Is your brother about?

BOB: No, I think not. He is feeding the pig.

LUCILE: How industrious you two are. I never see you idle a minute.

BOB: Oh, yes, we're little busy bees. We have to be.

LUCILE: It must take a lot of work to keep everything so spic and span. I wanted to invite your brother—and you—to climb the mountain with us tomorrow. Do you think you could arrange it?

BOB: I am afraid not. At least—I couldn't.

LUCILE: Oh, dear! It's only for a single afternoon.

BOB: It isn't the time it will take, exactly. But—but—well, the truth is, Miss Lucile, I don't believe I ought to see too much of you. I—I—I love you. I have from the moment I saw you. But what have I to offer a girl like you?

LUCILE: You love me? Oh, Mr. Tilton!

BOB: Of course, it's the very thing I ought not to do. My young life at present is made up of disappointment and longing for something that comes not. I expect no for an answer, but I hope you will forgive my hasty words.

LUCILE: Of course, I'll forgive you. And I'm very sorry if you are unhappy. You look so much like a fellow I know in Boston that is engaged to Beatrix King that I never dreamed you saw me. It's the funniest thing in the world how you two boys resemble those other two boys. Why your brother Charles—

BOB: Never mind. Don't talk about that. Tell me you are not angry with me for having unfolded to you the portals of my heart. Tell me that perhaps I may some day come in my Fierce Sparrow car and whirl you away to become my bride. [*He puts his*

arm around Lucile.] Tell me, Lucile—I dare call you that, tell me that you will be my wife.

LUCILE [*aside*]: Oh, what shall I say? I can't bear the sight of him. But he's proposed, and that's the only one I've had this summer to brag about when I get back home. [*To Bob.*] Yes, I promise you. But don't let anybody know. We will keep it a secret until some future date. I—I've got to break an engagement first, because I was engaged to Randolph King, Bea's brother. He's been gone now a long time and hasn't written to me or anything. I don't intend to be treated that way. Anyway, he was awfully silly at times and he would comb his hair pomp, regardless. Yes, Jim, I'll promise. Now I must go. Here comes Dolly King. She's an awful little tattle tale and will run and tell her mother if she catches us alone together. Goodbye—Jim. [*Exit.*]

BOB: Who's stung now?

RAN.: You don't want to keep this thing up, do you hear? If you do, we part company.

BOB: Oh, take your medicine. The game was fair enough. Here comes Dolly. [*Enter Dolly.*]

DOLLY: I want to see the cow slip, Rannie.

BOB: Run away and don't bother. There arn't any cow-slips.

DOLLY [*sticking out tongue at Bob*]: I'm not talking to you, Bob Webster. I'm talking to Rannie. Why can't I see her slip now, Rannie?

RAN.: Why, er—er—because it's too late.

DOLLY: Well, what time does she slip?

RAN.: Very early in the morning, just as Round, Red, Jolly Mr. Sun tosses off his rosy blankets, like the Peter Rabbit book you know.

DOLLY: As early as that?

RAN.: Yes. The moment the cow gets out of bed she puts on her slippers and goes out and, er—er—slips. Then she goes home, takes off her slippers and doesn't slip again until she slips the next morning.

DOLLY: Will you call me the very next time you see her putting on her slippers?

RAN.: Yes, my dear. The moment I see her reach under her bed for her slippers I will call you.

DOLLY [*throwing arms around Ran's waist*]: I just love you, Rannie. You can't fool me. I know you. I just love you all the better for telling lies. [*Exit.*]

BOB: Phew! She's the limit. You couldn't fool her by hook or by crook. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: Come, you Jim, you git to work and chop wood for Miss Susie. Foxey Grandpa, Mrs. Irving said to tell you Polly will be right down for her lessons. [*Exit R. M. Enter Pauline with books, accompanied by Ethelind.*]

PAULINE [*to Ethelind*]: I don't see why you need tag.

ETHELIND: I'm not tagging. I'm chaperoning you.

PAULINE: You'll need a chaperon yourself.

ETHELIND: We'll chaperon each other. Gus is coming down on the piazza to read.

PAULINE: To read sounds good.

ETHELIND: Remember, I'm chaperoning you, so eyes to the front and no tattling. [*Enter Van. Sits by Ethelind through lesson and they giggle and whisper together.*]

PAULINE: I'm ready, Mr. Tilton.

BOB [*to Ran.*]: Oh, you Latin Teacher. [*Exit.*]

RAN. [*to Pauline*]: My, my, what a pile of books? Are you behind in every one of them? How unfortunate. I shall begin by asking you a few questions to find out how you stand in class.

PAULINE: We never stand, Mr. Tilton. We always sit.

RAN.: Is that so? Now how much breath that saves me. I know without asking. Then let us open our Aeneid to the first chapter and you may read a little. I want to see if your pronounciation is correct. It is very important that it should be, in case you ever go to Latin, you know. You would, of course, want to talk with the natives.

PAULINE: Why, I thought Latin was a dead language, Mr. Tilton!

RAN.: No, no, indeed. I wish it were and had been buried before I struck college. Begin to read, please. [*Pauline reads rapidly a few lines.*]

RAN.: Your pronounciation is letter perfect. I'm pretty sure if you go to Latin you can buy a dozen bananas and a pint of peanuts without having to pay more than twice their value. Now let us have some English. Dear me, there are so many books I hardly know which one to choose. I tell you how we'll settle it! You may place them all on the floor in a row. I will then shut my eyes and select one. The one I choose will be the one we study.

PAULINE [*placing books on floor*]: How interesting! Now, choose.

RAN. [*taking up book*]: Shakespoke! How I dote on Shakespoke. Don't you?

PAULINE: I dote on anything, with you for a teacher.

RAN.: Open the book to page 39 and read an act from "Quart for Quart."

PAULINE: Why—there isn't any such play. There is "Measure for Measure." [*Hunts frantically.*]

RAN.: That's it. I knew it was something about quantity. Page 39.

PAULINE: Page 39 is blank, Mr. Tilton.

RAN.: How unfortunate! Then we can't study any longer. It is really aggravating when one has made up one's mind to do a thing thoroughly to find oneself balked in this way. But we may have better luck tomorrow. I will assign your lesson. Translate all of the Aeneid and memorize the play, "All's Right if It Ends All Right." Class dismissed. [*Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: If you're through with Polly, Foxey, you can go help Jim. He ain't got half enough wood chopped.

PAULINE [*to Ethelind*]: Come, Ethelind.

ETHELIND [*to Van*]: I must go. But I will be back. Wait for me. I can give her the slip easy. [*Turns back a moment.*] Gus! Gus! [*Pulls curl. Enter Lucile and Beatrix.*]

BEATRIX: We need just three more to make up our party.

LUCILE: Gus Van Der Water is here. He's an insufferable old bore, but he's better than nothing.

BEATRIX: There he is! I'll ask him. [*To Van.*] Why, Mr. Van Der Water. Are you here, too? What a charming surprise.

VAN [*rising and making a sweeping bow*]: Miss King, bah, Jove. And—well, well, well, Miss Martin. I'm delighted. Sit down. [*Girls sit with Van between them.*]

BEATRIX: We're planning a little trip to the mountain, Mr. Van Der Water, and we'd love to have you come along. Could we induce you?

LUCILE: You really must go, Mr. Van Der Water. It would add so much to the pleasure of the occasion.

VAN: I'd be delighted, ladies. Anything for a change. Do you know, I think this is the most stupid summer resort I ever was in. I do, truly. Nothing but mountains, mountains, mountains. But I'm glad you're here. I'll send for my launch and have it put on the lake. We'll make gay times, the three of us. [*He puts his arm about both girls. Enter Ethelind, unseen. She stands watching. Enter Bob and Ran, also unseen. They stand listening and watching.*]

LUCILE: Oh, Mr. Van Der Water, won't that be wonderful. Moonlight sails, mid-day picnics—oh, Bea, aren't you glad we're here.

VAN: I'll have the auto up, too. Oh, we'll be gay from now on.

LUCILE: Come on, Bea. It's time to dress for lunch. See you tomorrow, then, Mr. Van Der Water. Good-bye. [*Erit Bea and Lucile.*]

RAN. [*starting toward Van and shaking his fist in his face:*] You let me see you put your arm around Lucile Martin again, you, you, soft-shell crab, and I'll punch you for it. Do you catch my drift?

BOB: And when he gets through with you, I'll take a turn. No joking, either. [*Ethelind coming from hiding place.*]

ETHELIND: And I'll never, never, never speak to you again as long as I live, Augustus Adolphus Van Der Water.

VAN: But—what—I—what did I do—

ETHELIND: What did you do? What did you say? I know. I saw you and heard you. Good-bye—forever. [*She starts to go out, pulling the curl over her shoulder.*]

VAN: But Ethelind, you can't be angry. You are pulling your curl. It means—you know what it means—

ETHELIND: Yes, I do know what it means. It means, I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! [*Stamps foot.*] So there!

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE: [*Same as previous acts. R. M. and Miss C. on piazza. Miss C. is rocking vigorously.*]

MISS C.: I'm glad and thankful that the month is up and the boarders going home. I guess I've had about enough of them, and I'll rest through August.

R. M.: You listen to me, Miss Susie. You ain't near so tired of the boarders as you are of those two nuts, Jim and Charlie. I'm near dead myself, driving 'em the way I have to. They was bad enough before these girls come, but now they can't do anything—'fraid Miss Lucile or Miss Beatrix will do something they won't know about.

MISS C.: Do you think they're smitten with the girls?

R. M.: Smitten? Smashed, I call it.

MISS C.: I like both girls. I hope you've noticed their nice, lady-like manners, Rose Marie, and will try to act like 'em.

R. M.: Me act like them? Oh, Lawsey! I couldn't—but I'll try.

MISS C.: That's good. I like you, and I'd like to see you more of a lady. I'll miss you this winter when you go back to the city.

R. M.: I ain't goin' back to the city. I'm going to stay here with you. I've seen a long time ago you needed me. You ain't fit to take care of yourself any more'n a baby. Jes' see how these two guys, Jim and Charlie, would have done you, if I hadn't been 'round to perfect you! [*Enter Van Der Water.*]

VAN: I'm the most miserable man on earth.

R. M.: I'll say so!

VAN: Would you be kind enough to try and find Miss Ethelind Irving for me? Don't tell her I'm looking for her, just send her out here on an imaginary errand. She wouldn't come if she knew I wanted her, and I must see her.

R. M.: I'll send her along. [*Exit.*]

MISS C.: I guess I'll go see to my pudding. [*Exit.*]

VAN [*sitting in hammock and holding head in hands*]: Not once since that awful day has she even looked at me. Oh, it was all a miserable mistake. And besides Ethelind, the two men-of-all-work have contrived to make my life wretched. At times my life has been in danger, for with brooms and fists and threatening remarks, the two Tiltens have not ceased to annoy me. Ah, it is a sad world. [*Enter Ethelind.*]

VAN: Ethelind!

ETHELIND: You needn't speak to me.

VAN: I must.

ETHELIND: I won't listen. I won't. I won't. I won't. I'm going right away.

VAN: You must listen. I want to say that I didn't mean—

ETHELIND: Yes, you did. You meant to flirt with Trix and Lucile. And besides, you said this was the stupidest place you have ever been in, and you'd had a tiresome time. And—and—and I talked with you at least five minutes during the day! [*Sobs.*]

VAN: Don't cry, Ethelind! I—I—shall really do something terrible to myself if you do.

ETHELIND: You haven't got nerve enough. I'm tired and sick of you. I've hinted and hinted, and waited and waited, but you never seem to notice. I shall find somebody else to marry; if I don't, before I know it, I shall be an old maid.

VAN: I'm sure I never knew you hinted at anything. Now, why don't you—er—speak right out? It would be so much clearer and plainer, don't you know?

ETHELIND: A girl can't ask a man to elope with her, can she?

VAN: Why, why—is that what you mean—elope? And you've hinted at it, time and time again, and I never understood? Why, I begin to believe I'm not so awfully clever after all. When shall we elope?

ETHELIND: Now!

VAN: Now? But your aunt and sister—won't they have to come along?

ETHELIND: Of course not! Who ever heard of anybody eloping with their aunt and sister tagging? And how far do you think Aunt Emma would go? The only way we can ever be married, Gus Van Der Water, is to go alone and now.

VAN: Let's start then. I'll admit for a bright man I have been awfully stupid. [*Exit Van and Ethelind. Enter Ran. and Bob.*]

RAN.: Oh, the eternal pig and cow! I'll never eat pork or drink milk again as long as I live. Have you fed the critters this morning?

BOB: No. Have you looked in the Rural Route box for a letter today?

RAN.: No. I'm as sick of looking for a letter as I am taking care of the live-stock.

BOB: I'll stroll out. It might have come. [*Exit. Enter Lucile and Beatrix.*]

BEATRIX: Randolph King, I'm ashamed of you. I was never fully satisfied that you were telling me your right name, and I've been talking with Rose Marie, and she explained to me how you happened to be working here. The time, the auto and all, make it perfectly plain to me that you are my brother. Besides, papa wrote mama that he hadn't heard a word from you since he came back from the West, and he said the auto was gone too. Mama is worried to death. She thinks something terrible has happened to you, for she never doubted you as I did. I'm mighty glad of one thing. You've learned a lesson here. You won't run over a potato patch again in a hurry—especially when you've lost your pocket-book.

LUCILE: I'm awfully disappointed in you, Randolph. [*Enter Dolly.*]

DOLLY: Our auto is out in Miss Susie's barn, all rust and bust. Who put it there?

BEATRIX: Lead me to that broken auto, Dolly. That will prove everything. [*Exit Lucile, Dolly and Beatrix. Enter R. M.*]

R. M.: Say, Foxey, you know when you first come, you claimed you'd lost your pocketbook? Well, what kind of a one was it? Describe it, what was in it, etc.

RAN.: It was a billfold. I can't tell just how much money there was in it. Quite a sum.

R. M.: That's too bad, cause you can't identify it very well. Was there pictures of people in it, snapshots?

RAN.: Yes. Lots of 'em.

R. M.: Mostly of Miss Lucile?

RAN.: Oh, there might have been.

R. M.: I tell you, Foxey, you ain't cut out for a poet, either. Far's I can see you ain't cut out for anything perticular. You wrote up top of a poem, "To Miss Lucile," and begun it, "Oh, maiden, ever bright and fair"—then you stopped. Couldn't you think of anything to rhyme with fair?

RAN.: Never you mind. You've found my pocket-book, so hand it over. I'll reward you handsomely.

R. M.: I don't want any handsome reward. Let's finish the verse instead. "Maiden ever bright and fair, don't you ever comb your hair?" How'll that do? [*Enter Bob, waving a letter about and capering.*]

BOB: Here she is, Randolph! With the check. Now we're alright. We'll leave Millersville as soon as we get the car in commission.

RAN.: And Rose Marie has found my pocketbook. If she ever gives it to me. [*R. M. tosses it to him.*]

R. M.: Better let me take the poem to Miss Lucile, Foxey.

RAN. [*passing her a bill*]: Here's a little present. Can't you forget you ever saw that poem?

R. M. [*passing it back*]: I don't want to forget it. But I won't spring it on her. I promise. Here comes the folks now, all ready for the train. [*Enter summer boarders and Miss C.*]

MRS. I.: Has anybody seen Ethelind?

LUCILE: I saw her going down the road with Mr. Van Der Water a little while ago.

MRS. I.: With Van Der Water!

PAULINE: Here she comes now! [*Enter Ethelind and Van.*]

MRS. I.: Where have you been, Ethelind? We are waiting for you.

ETHELIND: Don't wait any longer. Gus and I have decided to stay another week.

MRS. I.: Indeed!

ETHELIND [*to Van*]: Tell her we're married.

VAN [*to Mrs. I.*]: You see, Mrs. Irving, Ethelind and I have are—are—

MRS. I.: Are what?

VAN [*weakly*]: Back again.

ETHELIND: Oh, let me tell her! Auntie, Gus and I have been married.

MRS. I.: Married! Married! [*Turns haughtily away.*] Come, Pauline, let us go.

MISS C.: The team's at the door.

BEATRIX: I've had a perfectly delightful time.

LUCILE: So have I.

MRS. K.: I should have, if I hadn't been so worried about my son Randolph.

BEATRIX: Don't worry any longer, mother. That is Randolph, as I have always insisted. He came up here in the car, smashed it to smithereens, and then tried to put it over on us that he wasn't one of the family. He couldn't put it over on me though!

RAN.: Couldn't I? When will the wedding be?

BEATRIX: Wretch!

RAN.: Yes, mother, I am your long lost and wandering son. I was just trying to see if I could prove black is white and the moon made of green cheese, and that Randolph King could be Charles Tilton. I can't seem to convince Dolly, so I'll give up the game. It was great fun playing it, though.

BOB: Oh, wasn't it.

LUCILE: Since when have you two found it so dreadfully funny to work? And work you have, like Trojans, since we've been here.

VAN: As a married man, I propose that we all give three cheers for Miss Cumming's boarding-house, and I suggest that we come here from now until—until—er, well, until, don't you know?

WOMEN BOARDERS: Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

RAN.: Will I spend my summers here from now until? I should say not, and if anybody mentions Millersville to me again as long as I live, I'll take their young lives on the spot.

BOB: You've said a whole lot, boy. [*Enter Jane Allen, with cup in hand.*]

MRS. A.: I ain't been nigh you for a month, Susie, but I must git a better view of your boarders 'fore they go home. They ain't goin' today, be they?

MISS C.: On the next train, Jane.

R. M.: Train's whistling up to Upham's Corner! Better speed her up! [*Boarders move away, waving to Miss C., Ran. and Bob.*]

RAN.: We'll be home in a day or two. Money makes the mare go, and money'll release us—two prisoners in Millersville.

CURTAIN

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